NEW MILTON INFANT SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs Amy Wake

6th January 2026

Introduction to Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are about to start a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment during play and lunch times.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools. In 2018, OPAL won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national playwork awards. In 2019, OPAL was awarded a quarter of a million pounds by Sport England to bring the programme to many more schools.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play. As 20% of their time in school is playtime, we want to make sure that this amount of time (equivalent to 1.4 years of primary school) is as good as possible.

There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme. They usually include: more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, fewer accidents and greatly improved behaviour.

Play is not messing about. It is the process evolution has come up with to enable children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught, while also having so much fun.

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity to come and talk to the OPAL mentor within this time. If you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk), where you will find lots of useful information and several videos about the programme.

In the coming 18 months you will be invited to events where you can come and see for yourselves what is happening and have the opportunity to join in too.

We are seeking a parent/carer to be a "Play Champion" who will

- Observe and assess playtime within the school at least once a year.
- Be part of the OPAL working party and attend development meetings.
- Support other parents to understand the school's approach to play.

- Advocate OPAL's approach and for children's play within the school community.
- Share contributions and ideas from parents and the wider community.
- Support the ongoing resourcing of loose parts from parents and the wider community.

If you would be interested in this exciting role then please email the School Office for a volunteer application form by **Tuesday 13th January 2026.**

We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve playtime for all children.

Yours sincerely

Amy Wake

Amy Wake
Headteacher